DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 446 282 CE 080 900

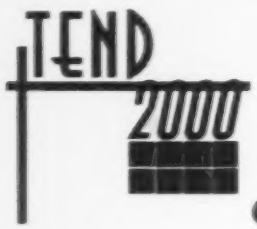
AUTHOR Farrell, Wendy; Farrell, Kent
TITLE The Tertiary Awareness Programme Pilot Transition from Secondary School to University. An Australian Experience in Student Transition.
PUB DATE 2000-04-08
NOTE 15p.; In: TEND 2000: Proceedings of the Technological Education and National Development Conference, "Crossroads of the New Millennium" (2nd, April 8-10, 2000, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates); see CE 080 883.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Acculturation; Adjustment (to Environment); Adult Learning; *Articulation (Education); Conventional Instruction; Daily Living Skills; Educational Environment; Educational Strategies; Foreign Countries; *High School Students; High Schools; Higher Education; *Lifelong Learning; *Orientation; Outcomes of Education; Partnerships in Education; *Pilot Projects; Program Effectiveness; Program Implementation; Skill Development; Social Integration; *Transitional Programs; Universities
IDENTIFIERS *Australia (Queensland)

ABSTRACT

Australia's Queensland Education Department and Central Queensland University (CQU) jointly developed a pilot program, called the Tertiary Awareness Programme Pilot (TAPP), to ease the transition of students advancing from Queensland's Glenmore State High School to the university. Unlike most previous transition-type courses, the TAPP relied heavily on a process of acculturation and socialization in conjunction with the delivery of a variety of traditional learning and student-centered life skills. The TAPP was designed to integrate the academic, social, economic, and environmental aspects of transition. Its primary aim was to encourage development of appropriate lifelong learning skills by senior high school students who were preparing for their first year at a university. The 10-week TAPP was delivered on campus at CQU to allow participants to experience a high degree of "socialization." The TAPP materials were delivered through a combination of lecture and tutorial formats. In addition, students took part in activities outside the classroom, including orientation programs with CQU's student association and meetings and social functions with faculty, and social functions with various departments. Postprogram evaluations confirmed that the TAPP significantly improved students' levels of understanding of a wide range of transition-related issues. (Contains 14 references.) (MN)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 446 282



Crossroads of the New Millennium

The Tertiary Awareness Programme Pilot - Transition From Secondary School To University, An Australian Experience In Student Transition.

Prepared and Presented

By

Mrs. Wendy Farrell

Deputy Principal

Deception Bay State High School

email : farrwe@decebayshs.qld.edu.au

Mr. Kent Farrell

Lecturer

Faculty of Business and Economics

Monash University

email : Kent.Farrell@buseco.monash.edu.au

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

A. Billingsley

Saturday 8 April, 2000

Workshop 2

CE 080 900

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Abstract

For many years now the problems associated with student transition from high school to university have been the subject of various reviews and investigations (OECD, 1977), (Anderson, 1980), (ACER, 1982). Problems experienced by students range from simple economic factors to personal factors including loss of confidence and in some cases, complete or partial withdrawal from the university course initially chosen (Gose, 1995), (Beder, 1997). Many institutions have studied these transition related problems and various solutions have been both proposed and in some cases, implemented with varying degrees of success, (McInnis and James, 1995), (DEETYA, 1999).

The "transition" problem has been the subject of a range of treatments from most stakeholders, from a variety of philosophical and pedagogical perspectives. Most studies recognise that to aid effective transition, all stakeholders should have a clear understanding of their specific roles within this process (DEETYA, 1999), but often these roles are not well understood by those involved. Many tertiary institutions, worldwide, offer a variety of preparation, bridging, access, orientation and/or foundation courses (White, 1998). Many of these courses are designed to assist in the transition process while others are more focused on some specific skills development or pre-qualification concept.

Recognising that a proactive step was required, a pilot transition programmeme was developed, administered and presented following a strategic alliance between the Queensland Education Department (Glenmore State High School) and the regional university (Central Queensland University). The pilot programmeme was operational between 22 April, 1998, to 23 July, 1998, and involved students and staff from the Glenmore SHS and staff from the Faculty of Business and Law at Central Queensland University.

Unlike most previous transition-type courses, this pilot programme relied heavily on a process of acculturation and socialisation, in conjunction with the delivery of a variety of traditional learning and student-centred life skills. This paper examines the pilot programmeme, describes its development, delivery and outcomes, which appear to have important implications for secondary and tertiary sector educators.

The Tertiary Awareness Programme Pilot- Transition from Secondary School to University, an Australian Experience in Student Transition.

INTRODUCTION

The process of "transition" occurs at various key stages throughout a person's life. The sequential progression of children through the formal primary and secondary education systems has attracted a good deal of research over the years (Power and Cotterell, 1981). These transition periods typically occur within the context of a structured family environment of some description. Perhaps one of the first transition periods that breaks away from this ordinarily supportive environment, is when senior high school students (Year 12) are preparing to undertake tertiary study or join the workforce.

It is during this period that students start to realise that their lives are changing. They become aware that, as individuals, they may have to make their own way in the world. Not all students have to fend for themselves outside the family structure at this time. Regardless of the individual circumstances of students, for many intending to commence tertiary study, one of the major areas of anxiety is the uncertainty of university life. These uncertainties often include:

- questions as to why they might be attending university,
- confusion regarding conflicting advice from parents, guidance officers and other careers advisers,
- the uncertainty of the potential long term benefits that accrue from tertiary education,
- concerns about gaining access to their desired course of study,
- apprehension regarding living away from home and family,
- the difficulty of establishing new friendships,
- the economics of being a student,
- choices about which institution and at what level to study,
- about the differences in teaching and learning between high school and university,
- trepidation about the differences in assessment methods and standards,
- a fear of failure.

(McInnis and James, 1995), (Peel, 1998), (White, 1998).

Failure to adjust to university life can have severe consequences. In many cases this can lead to the partial or complete withdrawal by the student from the university course initially

chosen (Gose, 1995), (Beder, 1997). In Australia, one-third of all new students consider withdrawal in the first year (McInnis and James, 1995).

Many other problems have also been identified, including the expectations of students entering university. For example, approximately 45% of students in the Committee for Advancement of University Teaching survey reported that the standard of the work expected at university was much higher than they had expected and most found that university was more demanding than school (McInnis and James, 1995).

That same report indicated that approximately 33% of students who had been surveyed thought that their high-school schooling had provided them with a "very good preparation" for their university study. This indicates that the greater majority of students felt that they had something less than good preparation. This supports the proposition that the preparatory work in high school was well below the level required for smooth transition into tertiary study. This is hardly surprising as it has been reported that schools "universally saw their primary role as being to get their students through the Victorian Certificate of Education and attain the maximum possible Tertiary Entrance Rank" (Macdonald, Litchfield, and Litchfield, 1998).

The Tertiary Entrance Rank (TER) has since been modified to meet national university entrance standards and is now known as Equivalent National Tertiary Entrance Rank (ENTER). This is the ranking given to all students completing year 12 of high school and is the measure by which Australian students are selected for tertiary courses.

A content analysis of transition courses, (including foundation supplementary, access, link, orientation, introductory, bridging, and preparatory) offered throughout Australian universities (White, McGuire, Farrell and Farrell, 1998), revealed limited courses which included experience of 'acculturation' adjustment from high school to university life.

The concept of a Tertiary Awareness Programme Pilot (TAPP) was initiated by a university lecturer, who was experienced in the tertiary education system (Kent Farrell), and a high school deputy principal (Wendy Farrell), who was familiar with the concerns and anxieties of senior students preparing for their adult lives and, in particular, students going on to tertiary study. This was supported by the practical experiences shared between local professional educators (both secondary and tertiary sectors). A transition programmeme rationale was

formulated around the concerns of high school students and first-year university students. This led to the establishment of a working party with appropriate stakeholder representation.

Stakeholders from the following areas were identified:

- High school students
- Undergraduate students
- Parents of the two cohorts
- Secondary education professionals
- Tertiary education professionals
- Central Queensland University
- Education Queensland (Glenmore SHS)

This group represented the major interest groups who were directly involved in this project and provided support, resources and guidance for the project.

PROGRAMME RATIONALE

The rationale underpinning the Tertiary Awareness Programme Pilot is that first year undergraduate students, who have recently left the high school education system, can experience difficulty in adjusting to university life. This adjustment includes the substantial differences in teaching/learning styles between high school education and university education (El-Khawas, Hoffert, Skilbeck, and Wagner, 1997), as well as the social implications of this transition, (Peel, 1998), (Kantanis, 1998). This comment acknowledges that a small proportion of students are well prepared for the transition to tertiary study.

Fundamental in the formulation of the rationale and development for the programme was the integration of the following aspects of transition;

- academic,
- social,
- economic,
- environmental.

These four areas have since been highlighted in more recent transition research undertaken by independent researchers (Kantanis, 1998). The emphasis in the pilot programme was the fusion of two of these areas, the social and academic aspects of transition. Economic and environmental issues were also included in the initial framework of the course. A working

party was formed (from the stakeholder group) and set about the development, resourcing and administration of the programme.

PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT

Mr Farrell negotiated the funding for the project and, with funds drawn from the Glenmore SHS, the Faculty of Business and Law as well as the School of Marketing and Tourism, appointed Ms Tina White as the course co-ordinator. The first task to be undertaken was to formulate clear objectives for the operation of the programme.

Accordingly, the working party developed a set of primary objectives for the pilot programme, formulated around the existing literature and previous research that had been conducted in this field. These objectives were:

- to equip senior students with appropriate skills to assist in their transition from high school to tertiary study;
- to provide senior students with appropriate experiences of undergraduate study;
- to promote awareness of job-personality match and subsequent links to qualifications required and courses available;
- to provide senior students with a decision criteria for deciding on options regarding courses, universities, career prospects, professional memberships and so on.;
- to provide senior students with appropriate learning skills that will assist in their transition to university and other further study;
- to provide senior students with learning skills that are complementary and can be utilised in their senior year of secondary schooling;
- to provide senior students with confidence in dealing with the university administration and support bodies (eg CQU library);
- to assist senior students to develop a network of contacts within CQU and associated stake holders.

The primary aim of the TAPP was to encourage the development of appropriate life long learning skills of senior high school students who were preparing for first year at university. In addition, it was predicted that these same students would find this programme helpful in completing final year studies at high school. In this sense, the programme was informative, complementary and innovative and was clearly focused on the "transition" process.

However, in the pre-course development stage (see section headed pre-course development below) of the TAPP, it was determined (from initial interviews with students) that students were concerned with numerous other issues outside the scope of a study skills course Specifically, those discussions highlighted the need for accurate and timely information that would help students to establish decision criteria for selecting an appropriate tertiary course, and institution, as well as addressing issues of acculturation and socialisation into the university environment.

To this end the objectives were extended and modified to encompass the suitable preparation of high-school students for university life, including the development of independent life long learning skills, socialisation experiences, acculturation experiences and provision of accurate and up-to-date information regarding university life as a student.

PRE-COURSE DEVELOPMENT.

This stage of the programme saw a number of parallel activities being undertaken. These included:

- Literature review and synthesis (including a content analysis of similar national and international programmes);
- Selection of student cohort;
- Ethical clearance (most students were under 18 years of age and this required parental consent in addition to individual consent);
- Detailed discussions with stakeholders (including high school faculty staff and university faculty staff);
- Review of programme objectives;
- Development of course materials (including unit profile and assessment items);
- Resource allocation (teaching space, course materials, timetabling, transport etc.);
- Advertising and promotional material (both internal and external).

SELECTION OF STUDENT COHORT.

As Glenmore State High School was represented on the working party and Mrs Farrell was involved in the development of suitable programme objectives, it was decided to use the year 12-student cohort of that school, for the pilot study. Student participation in the programme was determined by targeting high school students who had self-identified possible tertiary pathways or who may have been considering tertiary study. These students were offered an

opportunity to take part in the pilot programme. In total, 27 students participated and completed the pilot programme, from an original 30 students.

COURSE DEVELOPMENT

- Recognising the importance of the role of the high school teachers in bridging the gap between the secondary and tertiary education environments, a number of high school teachers who regularly interacted with senior students were also consulted for input into the programme. In addition, the District Director of Education (Education Queensland) and the High School principal were consulted and expressed their active support for the programme. At the same time, senior university staff and academics were advised of the programme and invited to participate. The concept of the programme was well received by all concerned.

- Additionally, it was decided that a benchmarking project relating to this activity would be useful for programme evaluation and further research. A Group Support System (GSS) approach was used to collect data. This was accomplished using a Grouputer hardware/software combination (Farrell, Whymark and Farrell, 2000). Interested readers wanting more details on this process will find a comprehensive review of this methodology in the aforementioned working paper.

A series of questions were developed in an effort to position the existing knowledge of the student cohort in such a way that any changes to their individual levels of knowledge could be readily observed. Investigations were made into student perceptions and opinions of several issues relating to university and tertiary education in a general sense. These questions were trialled on a small sample (not part of the pilot cohort) and modifications were made following student responses. Subsequent to this pre-test, a final agenda of 16 questions was developed and administered to the pilot cohort. For this activity students were paired and data was collected.

UNEXPECTED FINDINGS.

While there were many interesting findings from this small group, several issues were immediately highlighted. For example, when asked about the economics of being a student (how much might their weekly food bill total) some respondents indicated that they would budget A$10.00 (US$6.20) per week. Students were asked their intentions regarding moving away from the area to undertake further study. Fifty three per-cent indicated that they would

be moving away from the area to undertake further study. When asked to express their immediate concerns about university life, they identified a significant and lengthy list of legitimate issues. Detailed findings of the pre-course evaluation confirmed that much work was needed in the area of transition and a full description of those results can be obtained from the authors.

THE PILOT PROGRAMME

The pilot programme was delivered on-campus at CQU - Rockhampton between 22 April, 1998, and 23 July, 1998. Students attended the pilot programme over a period of 10 weeks (2-3 hours per week) in the university environment where a high degree of 'socialisation' could be experienced. The students received TAPP material using a combination of lecture and tutorial formats, which allowed them to experience both of these frequently used tertiary educational delivery methods. This delivery occurred concurrently with their year 12 studies. Ms White, the course co-ordinator developed the bulk of the TAPP material and Ms McGuire assisted her in this process. Ms White also delivered the majority of lectures.

The students were also involved in other activities outside the classroom, including orientation programmes with the Student Association, meetings with other faculty staff, social functions with various departments, and so on. This had advantages in the preparation of these students for tertiary study, helping to ease the transition from a high school teaching/learning environment to a university teaching/learning environment. Table 1 illustrates the weekly lecture schedule used for the pilot programme.

Table 1 Weekly lecture schedule – TAPP 1998.

Week	Topic
1	General Introduction, Further study, Why University? Campus Tour / Orientation
2	What Job suits Me? What Jobs Pay
3	Relevant courses / Universities / colleges etc. Modes of Study / Entry Requirements / Scholarships etc
4	How to make the decision on course / university etc. Location, cost of living, reputation of course, graduate placement, personal factors etc.
5	Contact in area of interest
6	Your First Year at University Part 1 - Moving Out, Budgeting and Accommodation, Classes, Your Rights and Responsibilities Study Skills Part 1 - Importance of Planning, Time Management, Effective Note Taking

7	Your First Year at University Part 2 – Clubs and Societies, Drugs and Alcohol
	Study Skills Part 2 – Library Tour, Referencing
8	Your First Year at University Part 3 – Student Politics, Student
	Unions and Representative Councils
	Study Skills Part 3 – Writing Skills, Assignment
9	Your First Year at University Part 4 – Support Services Available
	Study skills Part 4 – Oral Presentation Skills, Surviving Exams
10	Contacts in relevant areas of interest / courses / universities etc.
	Other information – Austudy / Abstudy / HECS etc.
	General Summary

Source: Unit Profile CQU Faculty of Business and Law, 1998

Integral to the TAPP was the co-development of suitable assessment activities for this cohort. With the co-operation from staff of the Glenmore State High School, the assessment activity was embedded into their existing school curriculum.

In this way assessment requirements of the programme presented minimal interference with the existing time-constraints of the senior schooling assessment schedule.

The assessment activity was drawn from a previous assessment piece completed in English where students were required to write a paper titled 'World of Work'. This paper necessitated them to research a preferred career choice and develop a written profile of this career option for information and use by others.

For the TAPP assessment activity, students were asked to re-write this piece of school assessment, incorporating all of the learning skills that were covered as part of the TAPP programme. This required using appropriate referencing, academic writing styles, additional independent research, report writing techniques and a range of associated academic skills. The students were assessed on this paper at undergraduate level, so as to give participating students and their teachers an accurate measure of their standard at tertiary level. Overall students performed well on this assessment activity. The final assessment results are displayed in table 2.

Table 2 Assessment results – TAPP 1998.

Grade	Marks Range	Number
HD (High Distinction)	85-100	4
D (Distinction)	75-84	4
C (Credit)	65-74	5
P (Pass)	50-64	9
F (Fail)	<50	1
DNS (Did not submit)		4

Source: (White, 1998, p. 11)

In this way students not only clarified their perceptions of what was required of assessment at tertiary level, but also increased their confidence in attempting an assessment activity at this level of study. Students who successfully completed the assessment received a 'Certificate of Achievement' from CQU and those who did not submit the assessment activity or were awarded a "fail" grade, received a 'Certificate of Attendance' for their participation.

Following the completion of the course, the graduates were presented with their certificates at a public ceremony attended by senior university staff, the district education director, local educational professionals, parents, friends and families. During the awards ceremony a multi-media presentation of the programme was made to the audience and this presentation stimulated many inquiries from schools in the region. The entire TAPP enjoyed substantial media coverage in both local media as well as national media with many interviews and presentations flowing from the pilot programme.

PILOT COURSE EVALUATIONS AND OUTCOMES.

On completion of the programme, a post-course evaluation was conducted at CQU. The GSS set-up and pairing of students was used in a similar manner as the pre-course evaluation. In addition to the original 16 questions (pre-course evaluation), several additional questions were asked of respondents. These questions were designed to collect general information regarding perceptions and opinions of the completed course. Students enthusiastically participated in the post-evaluation session. It was evident that there were notable changes in the levels of understanding by students on a wide range of issues compared to the pre-evaluation.

This comparison is perhaps best highlighted with the three previous examples discussed.

1. From a position of uncertainty, the economics of student life were now more realistic, with precise, accurate dollar amounts now able to be identified by students for specific activities.
2. On completion of the TAPP, results indicated that 32% of students would be moving out of the region to undertake further study and a significant 68% indicated they would be staying within Central Queensland for this purpose. This represents a significant decrease in those students who had initially indicated their intention to move away from home to undertake tertiary study.
3. The concerns students had identified about university life were significantly reduced on completion of the TAPP. From the original long list of concerns, the only concerns remaining included:
   a. being accepted to course of their choice
   b. cost/money
   c. moving away from home
   d. OP (ENTER) scores

It is noteworthy that when asked what did they want to gain from the TAPP, students' responses included:

- a better/fuller understanding of university life;
- confidence in dealing with university life;
- what to expect at university;
- information on different courses, and;
- how to choose a course.

On the completion of the course 100% of the students indicated that they had gained what they had originally wanted and 100% also indicated that they would recommend the programme to other students. This is by far the strongest support for the success of the programme in dealing with transition issues from the perspective of the primary target group.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that participating students also showed signs of increased confidence over the course of the programme. This was particularly evident during the subsequent CQU Open Day activities where observation revealed many of these students adopting a "leadership and mentoring" role with students unfamiliar with the institution. It is anticipated that any increase in confidence in dealing with the university system, prior to

entry, would have positive implications for those students who eventually make the transition from high school to university.

IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTED FURTHER RESEARCH.

Following on from the pilot programme a number of issues that needed closer attention became evident. Firstly the resourcing issue regarding "who should fund" such activities was questioned. Other issues included:

- Marketing (of the programme and outcomes);
- The importance of the links between university and school as well as the links between educational professionals from those areas;
- Accuracy and currency of information delivered during the programme;
- Inclusion of traditional non-tertiary bound students;
- Delivery modes – the ability to be inclusive over a wide geographic area;
- Internships and the desire (and need) of students to gain commercial experience while undertaking tertiary study;
- The value of students attending in an "on-campus" mode to heighten the socialisation aspects of university life;
- The potential to reduce retention problems associated with first-year undergraduate study.

CONCLUSION

In all, the TAPP provided the participating students with a unique experience of undergraduate life. They gained new skills, reinforced existing skills and increased their knowledge of the many facets of university life. They were exposed to the realities of possibly living away from home for the first time, the importance and responsibility of independence, the expectations of first-year assessment standards. They were also given the opportunity to explore in depth and on-campus, their preferred areas of tertiary interest.

The researchers posit that while this course was recognised as a success and a worthwhile experience for all concerned, it is a preparatory course and of itself is not enough. Complementary programmes, such as Open Days, University Visits, Student Mentoring Programmes, School Visits, Enhancement Courses, Accelerated Learning programmes and the like, all have important roles to play. Once in the university system, many students require on-going support from a range of parties to make a successful transition. We, as educators and as parents share both a role and a responsibility in these transition activities.

REFERENCES

- ACER., (1982). "From school to tertiary study". *Transition to college and university in Victoria*. Hawthorn, Victoria: Australian Council for Educational Research.
- Anderson, D. S., (1980). *Transition from school. An annotated bibliography of recent Australian studies*. Canberra: Australian National University Press.
- Beder, S., (1997). *Addressing the issues of social and academic integration for first year students*. Wollongong: Faculty of Arts - University of Wollongong.
- DEETYA., (1999). *Transition from Secondary to Tertiary: A Performance Study* (Report 36). Canberra: Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs.
- El-Khawas, E., Hoffert, M., Skilbeck, M., and Wagner, A., (1997). *Thematic Review of the First years of Tertiary Education in Australia*. Paris.
- Gose, B., (1995). "A new approach to ease the way for Freshmen". *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (8th September 1995), A57-A58.
- Kantanis, S. T., (1998, July 5 - 8, 1998). "The role of programme cohesion in effecting a more recognised transition from secondary school to university". *Paper presented at the 3rd Pacific Rim Conference*: First Year in Higher Education, Auckland, and New Zealand.
- Macdonald, I., Litchfield, K., and Litchfield, J. (1998). *School Preparation for Tertiary Study*.
- McInnis, C., and James, R., (1995,). "First year on campus: Diversity in the initial experiences of Australian undergraduates". *Australian Government Printing Service (AGPS)*.
- OECD., (1977). Australia, *Transition from school to work or further study* (9264116990). Paris, France: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (Washington, D.C.).
- Peel, M., (1998). *The Transition from Year Twelve to University* . Melbourne: Monash University.
- Power, C. N., and Cotterell, J., (1981). *Changes in students in the transition between primary and secondary school* (0642059624). Canberra: Australian Govt. Pub. Service.
- White, T., (1998). "Summary report: Findings and Results of the Tertiary Awareness Programme Pilot" *(Unpublished Report)*. Rockhampton: Central Queensland University.
- White, T., McGuire, R., Farrell, K., and Farrell, W., (1998). "A proposal to convert the Tertiary Awareness Programme Pilot, to the Tertiary Awareness Programme". *(Internal Report Unclassified)*. Rockhampton: Central Queensland University.